

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L L E N I N G R A D 0 7 5 0

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CGEN, UR, US
SUBJ: INCIDENTS ON BOARD U.S. MERCHANT VESSEL, ERNA ELIZABETH

REF: (A) LENINGRAD 0674, (B) STATE 130510

1. SUMMARY: SS ERNA ELIZABETH DOCKED JUNE 16 AND WAS VISITED BY CONGENOFF SAME DAY. SHIP'S OFFICERS REPORTED THEIR SEARCH OF VESSEL WHILE DOCKED IN RIGA HAD TURNED UP NO EVIDENCE AS TO THE IDENTITY OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR INCIDENTS REPORTED REFTEL B. SHIP'S OFFICERS REPORTED THERE HAD BEEN INCIDENTS OF THEFT AND DESTRUCTION OF SHIP PROPERTY SINCE SHIP LEFT RIGA, BUT THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO SUCH INCIDENTS FOR SEVERAL DAYS PRIOR TO DOCKING IN LENINGRAD. TEN MEMBERS OF CREW MADE STATEMENTS CONCERNING CIRCUMSTANCES AND/OR LOSSES SUFFERED IN REPORTED INCIDENTS. CAPTAIN AND CHIEF MATE'S REPORTS FORWARDED BY CONGEN TO COAST GUARD. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING VISITS TO ERNA ELIZABETH, JUNE 16, 20, AND 21, CONGENOFF LEARNED THAT NO EVIDENCE HAD DEVELOPED AS TO IDENTITY OF PERSON, OR PERSONS, RESPONSIBLE FOR THEFT AND DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY ON BOARD SS ERNA ELIZABETH. CONVERSATIONS WITH SHIP'S OFFICERS, UNION DELEGATES, AND SEVERAL MEMBERS OF CREW REVEALED THERE HAD BEEN CONSIDERABLE RACIAL TENSION ON BOARD, THAT THIS TENSION WAS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SITUATION REPORTED
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LENDING 00750 221312Z

REFTEL B, AND THAT IT HAD BEEN HEIGHTENED BY THE LONG WAITING PERIODS IN OUTER ANCHORAGE AT RIGA AND LENINGRAD. ERNA ELIZABETH ARRIVED LENINGRAD MAY 25, BUT COULD NOT DOCK UNTIL JUNE 16.

3. TEN MEMBERS OF CREW WHO REPORTEDLY SUFFERED INCIDENTS OF THEFT OR BREAK-INS HAD SUBMITTED STATEMENTS ON THESE INCIDENTS, AND ON SUBSEQUENT VISIT CONGENOFF MET WITH THESE CREWMEN

AND TOOK THEIR STATEMENTS AS SWORN STATEMENTS AS REQUESTED. CAPTAIN AND CHIEF MATE ALSO REQUESTED CONGENOFF TO FORWARD THEIR REPORTS TO COAST GUARD AND THIS HAS BEEN DONE.

4. ITEMS REPORTED MISSING OR STOLEN INCLUDE: DOLLARS 77 IN CASH, A WRISTWATCH, RADIO, 3 SIXPACKS OF BEER, TOILET ARTICLE BAG, TAPE CASSETTE, DOLLARS 100 IN CASH, TYPEWRITER, POCKET CALCULATOR, UNION BOOK, AND SEAMAN'S DISCHARGE. SIX STATEMENTS SPECIFICALLY REPORT EITHER BREAK-INS OR ATTEMPTED BREAK-INS. REPORTED MALICIOUS DAMAGE INCLUDED LOSS OF LADDER AND SHIP LINES AND POSSIBLY ALLOWING GRAIN IN TWO HOLDS TO GET WET.

5. IN ADDITION TO REPORTED INCIDENTS OF BREAKING AND ENTERING AND THEFT, SHIP'S OFFICERS COMPLAINED OF INSUBORDINATION OF CERTAIN MEMBERS OF CREW. ONE OF THESE SUSPECTED PERSONS WAS INTERVIEWED BY CONGENOFF AND INDICATED HE WISHED TO LEAVE SHIP. HIS REQUEST FOR MEDICAL DISCHARGE WAS DENIED AS BEING UNSUBSTANTIATED BY MEDICAL REPORT OF SOVIET DOCTORS AND BY RECORD IN SHIP'S MEDICAL LOG. HE WAS GRANTED A "MUTUAL CONSENT" DISCHARGE ON JUNE 17. HE, AND ANOTHER CREWMAN, WHO WAS GIVEN A MEDICAL DISCHARGE, DEPARTED FOR U.S. ON JUNE 21. CONVERSATIONS WITH CREWMEN ON JUNE 20 REVEALED THAT MANY CONSIDERED MAN GIVEN MUTUAL CONSENT DISCHARGE AS SUSPECT IN REPORTED INCIDENTS OF THEFT, AS HAD EARLIER CONVERSATIONS WITH SHIP'S OFFICERS. SEAMEN WHO GAVE SUCH OPINION FELT TENSION WOULD NOW SUBSIDE AND THAT ATTENTION OF CONGENOFF WOULD DETER OTHER POSSIBLE

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PAGE 03 LENDING 00750 221312Z

SUSPECTS FROM FURTHER INCIDENTS.

6. COMMENT: CONGEN UNABLE TO TAKE MEASURES OUTLINED 7 FAM 534.2-4-6 AND 7 FAM 536 FOR LACK OF EVIDENCE AND SUSPECT. SERIOUS PROBLEM OF CREW MORALE, REPORTED INSUBORDINATION, SUSPICIONS AMONG CREW MEMBERS--WHETHER FOUNDED OR UNFOUNDED--AND CONSEQUENT POSSIBILITY OF VIOLENCE, WHICH WAS RAISED BY SOME, INDICATED ACTION OF GRANTING SEAMAN MUTUAL CONSENT DISCHARGE. HE DID NOT EXERCISE HIS OPTION OF PROTESTING ON SEAMAN ACTION CERTIFICATE (FS-463) HIS PREFERENCE FOR MEDICAL DISCHARGE. END COMMENT.

7. SS ERNA ELIZABETH SCHEDULED TO DEPART LENINGRAD JUNE 27 UPON COMPLETION DISCHARGE OF CARGO OF CORN. SHIP'S CAPTAIN PROVIDED NOTARIZED SWORN STATEMENTS IN SEALED ENVELOPE FOR DELIVERY TO PROPER MARITIME AUTHORITIES. RUECKERT

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